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Hermeneutics and Classical Political Thought in Leo Strauss

I

Leo Strauss is known to us as the defender of the natural law of the ancients against the natural law of the moderns, as the utmost adversary of historicists and political scientists, and, finally, as the author of one of the most elaborated and detailed criticisms of the atheism of Machiavelli.[1] All of this is enough to make Leo Strauss an exceptional figure in the non-Catholic American culture of our times. Scholars of political doctrines who oppose the same way and for the same reasons sociology and historicism, Machiavellianism and liberalism, are not common in the United States. But what is most interesting in Leo Strauss is the special point of view from which his polemic against historicism and sociology is conducted, a point of view drawn both from his criteria as an interpreter of texts and from his moral and perhaps religious presuppositions. A bibliography of his many scattered writings, contained in a book in his honor, *Ancients and Moderns: Essays on the Tradition of Political Philosophy in Honor of L. Strauss* (New York, 1964), will help us to understand the most original aspects of his personality.[2]

Throughout his life, L. Strauss has been above all an interpreter of texts—and of difficult ones. He began by interpreting Spinoza (1930), Maimonides (1935), and Moses Mendelssohn (introduction to the Jubiläumsausgabe, 1929) at a time when he still was permitted to live in his

1. As far as I know, the only book by Strauss that has been translated into Italian is *Diritto naturale e storia*, N. Pierri, Venice, 1957, which is not included in the bibliography below. Among the Italian reviews, see the one to the French translation of the first edition of the book *On Tyranny* by E. Giancotti in *Rassegna di Filosofia* (1954): 383. To my knowledge, the discussion alluded to by G. Sasso in *Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana* (1961): 51, n. 2, has not been published.

2. The essays are edited by J. Cropsey, with whom L. Strauss edited the anthology *History of Political Philosophy*, Chicago, 1963.

own country and to publish in his own language. Later, when he was an exile in England, he interpreted Hobbes (although his book was written in German, it could only be published in an English translation). From 1938 on, after he settled in the United States, first at the New School for Social Research in New York City and later (1949) at the Department of Political Science of the University of Chicago, he has interpreted a considerable number of difficult texts. He has returned repeatedly to his beloved Maimonides, for example, in the introduction to *The Guide of the Perplexed* translated by S. Pines. His work on Arab and Jewish thinkers, whom he studied in the original, includes the interpretation of *Kuzari* by Judas Levita and the *Philosophy of Plato* by Farabi. Among the moderns he has interpreted Machiavelli, Locke, and, once again, Hobbes. But in the past decades he has devoted himself to the study of the Greeks: Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and finally, not at all unexpectedly, Aristophanes.[3]

The most rigorous formulation of Leo Strauss's antihistoricism is found in his discussion of *The Idea of History* by R. G. Collingwood in the *Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 559–86. As is generally known, in these posthumously published lectures, Collingwood claimed that every historical period is matched by a corresponding historical thought that is absolutely valid for that period of time. He also believed that every historic research is relative to the present time, that is, to something which, by definition, was foreign to the interests of men of the past. Strauss objects that there is no reason to question a thinker of the past unless his problems are our problems and unless we are ready to admit the possibility that, for example, Plato was right. This implies that we should subject our research, at least temporarily, to the research of thinkers from the past, who may be right. This subordination of our research to the thinkers from the past implies in turn that we should follow Plato in his way of thinking, accept, at least temporarily, the limits he gives himself, his way of presenting arguments. Thus, for Leo Strauss, the history of thought is an attempt to regain a level of thought that has been lost. A history of thought would not be necessary unless we had "good reasons for believing that we can learn something of the

3. Main works: *Die Religionskritik Spinozas,* Berlin, 1930, of which *Spinoza's Critique of Religion,* New York, 1965, is a second edition with a rather important new introduction; *Philosophie und Gesetz. Beiträge zum Verstandnis Maimunis und seiner Vorlaufer,* Berlin, 1935; *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes,* Oxford, 1936, reprinted Chicago, 1952; *Persecution and the Art of Writing,* Glencoe, 1952; *Natural Right and History,* Chicago, 1953; *Thoughts on Machiavelli,* Glencoe, 1958; *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies,* Glencoe, 1959; *On Tyranny, A Study of Xenophon's Hieron,* Glencoe, 1963; introduction to M. Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed,* trans. S. Pines, Chicago, 1963; *The City and Man,* Chicago 1964; *Socrates and Aristophanes,* New York, 1966.

utmost importance from the thought of the past which we cannot learn from our contemporaries. History takes on philosophic significance for men living in an age of intellectual decline. Studying the thinkers of the past becomes essential for men living in an age of intellectual decline because it is the only practicable way in which they can recover a proper understanding of the fundamental problems."[4] It follows that interpreting Plato is different from criticizing Plato: to interpret Plato means to remain within the guidelines of Plato whereas to criticize Plato means to exceed those guidelines. To expect to judge the past from the point of view of the present means to presume that the present offers a better point of view than the past. The real thinker must keep open the possibility that he is living in an age that is inferior to the past: "one must be swayed by a sincere longing for the past."[5]

This attitude with respect to the past implies on the one hand a certain way of reading books from the past and also supports a certain consideration of the classics of the past. As to how we should read books from the past, two principles emerge from Strauss's books. One is that in order to understand a writer one must follow him, not guide him, trying to bear in mind all of the meanders and apparent contradictions of his thought. For Strauss, the possible danger lies in the fact that a reader might superimpose his own notions of the past onto the past even before he discovers what the ancients thought of a particular issue. Hence, Strauss's lengthy discussion of the book by E. A. Havelock, *The Liberal Temper in Greek Politics* (1957) in the *Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1959): 390–439. Strauss does not like liberals in the modern sense; thus he does not like the attempt (indeed a weak one) by Havelock to single out a liberal tradition in Greek thought. Strauss's indignation is directed against the modern interpreter who replaces the thought of the author he is interpreting with his own personal thought: "Havelock takes it for granted that the modern social scientist, but not Hesiod, understood what happened in Hesiod or to Hesiod."[6]

The second principle of Strauss's hermeneutics is that it is possible for a thinker consciously to leave something implicit, or to become entirely silent as to the most important point of his thought. The most common cases of a thought that intentionally has been expressed tacitly involve writers who find themselves in situations of censorship or persecution. Leo Strauss discusses such cases in a series of essays, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, 1952). We cannot expect Spinoza

4. Review of R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History,* in *Review of Metaphysics* 5 (1952): 585.

5. Ibid., p. 576.

6. *Review of Metaphysics* 12 (1959): 404.

to tell us all that he thinks and only what he thinks in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. But for Strauss, the cases in which a writer may not tell us everything he thinks are many and varied: these include the cases where an author accepts the distinction between esoteric and exoteric thought. In fact it is difficult to shake off the impression that for Strauss all political and religious thought up to the eighteenth century is by its nature rooted in the distinction between esoteric and exoteric, and thus requires of the interpreter an effort of exegesis at two levels, one for the layman and one for the initiated. Hence the great care—and we should say the great amount of writing—that Strauss devotes to the interpretation of texts he believes possess these double layers.

In my opinion, Strauss's originality consists in having raised a question of principle and of having stuck with it in each of his interpretive essays. The question of principle is that the aristocratic notion of fundamental truths that "no decent person would say in public"[7] has been and continues to be accepted by too many people for it to be neglected when interpreting a text. As against a sociology of knowledge, Strauss notes that this notion developed in a period of relative freedom in Germany when it made sense to wonder if and to what extent a given philosophy expresses a given society. But more often, he adds, the issue is not whether a philosophy expresses a given society but whether a given society makes it possible for a given philosophy to express itself. In the past, philosophers were not the expression of a given society; they protected the interests of philosophy against or notwithstanding society. In the Jewish and Arab culture of the Middle Ages, philosophy was in an even more precarious state than in the contemporary Christian world: philosophy was not necessary for the interpretation of Hebrew or Muslim Law, whereas for the Christians it was the handmaid of theology. According to Strauss, the precarious position of philosophy among Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages was similar to that of philosophy in Greek cities, where the philosopher disrupted public order instead of justifying it. This explains Strauss's special concern with the interpretation of medieval Arab and Jewish philosophers and of Greek philosophers, especially his constant return to the enigmatic philosopher Maimonides.

According to Strauss, the first problem with Maimonides is that, as a devoted believer in Judaism, he should have stayed away from philosophy, for it is an ancient Jewish premise that to be Jewish and to be a philosopher are two incompatible things.[8] Moreover, Maimonides is

7. *Persecution and the Art of Writing* p. 36. [Y. Belaval, *Critique*, 1953, pp. 852–66.]
8. *The Guide of the Perplexed*, p. liv.

not simply a philosopher: he is a philosopher who intends to give an esoteric interpretation of a book, the Bible, which he holds to be esoteric. Finally, Maimonides does not exclude the layman from his book. Indeed, he organizes his interpretation of the Bible (especially the problems of the incorporeity of God and the creation of the world) in a way that satisfies the doubts of the layman and at the same time suggest questions for the competent or the initiated.[9]

According to Strauss, problems with the interpretation of Greek thinkers and poets are different but no less difficult. In Xenophon's *Hyeron* we have the illusion of finding a series of reasonable recommendations for a tyrant—let us say, for one of the Dionysiuses of Syracuse—written at a time when Socratic philosophers were known to woo tyrants. But with careful reading, a problem arises. Gerone is represented as a tyrant despite himself, aware only of the disadvantages of being a tyrant. But given that he remains a tyrant, the representation of Gerone cannot be considered entirely sincere, or at least simple. On the other hand, Simonides, who encourages Gerone to seek popularity by becoming a virtuous tyrant, is placed in the ambiguous position of a wise man who gives advice to someone who could punish him if the advice were not welcome. The situation presented by Xenophon is such that neither the tyrant nor the wise man can be entirely sincere. A wise man who advises a tyrant is ipso facto caught up in a false situation.

With the more recent book *Socrates and Aristophanes* (New York, 1966), the exegesis of Strauss's Socratic thought tends to become highly complex. The obvious intention of the book is to establish what Aristophanes thought of Socrates and whether Aristophanes' representation of Socrates deserves credit as against the Platonic interpretation: these are old issues. But Strauss is gradually convinced that Aristophanes and Plato come quite close to each other, that they think in a similar way, although they interpret Socrates differently. Aristophanes' Socrates is different from Plato's Socrates primarily in that he is nonpolitical Socrates. But unlike Nietzsche (always present in Leo Strauss), it would appear that Aristophanes' caricature of Socrates, instead of dealing a blow to the entire Socratic tradition, indeed reaffirms the interpretation of political life as we find it in Plato. Aristophanes is a utopian; his representation of the best political order is comical because he realizes that utopia is at the limit of impossibility and thus is an object of laughter. But Plato, too, is a utopian; indeed, as we shall see,

9. Ibid.

according to Strauss, all classical thought represents a noble attempt to come close to this impossibility. And because Plato is aware of the utopian character of his thought, he smiles at himself and indulges in comedy, as the readers of his dialogues know.

In the book *Socrates and Aristophanes*, we do not find any reference to Strauss's previous book, *The City and Man* (Chicago, 1964), as being supplementary to the first. But in my opinion *The City and Man* seems indispensable for an understanding of Strauss's book on Aristophanes. In *The City and Man*, the affinity between Aristophanes and Plato, to the extent that they are both utopians, is even more explicit: "We may . . . say that the Socratic conversation and hence the Platonic dialogue is slightly more akin to comedy than to tragedy. . . . The Platonic dialogue brings to its completion what could be thought to have been completed by Aristophanes."[10] In another work, Strauss has also claimed that the classical philosopher "is driven to adopt a view that is no longer generally held, a truly paradoxical view, one that is generally considered 'absurd' or 'ridiculous.'"[11] And in his major work on natural law, Strauss has stated clearly that for classical thought the best regime is "utopia."[12]

II

Thus, the hermeneutics of Leo Strauss are strictly connected with the trend of his political philosophy. For Strauss the esoteric nature of philosophy is not only a contingent characteristic of classical thought that is to be kept in mind in the act of interpreting a text; it is the mark of superiority of classical thought with respect to the modern. It is possible that Strauss claims for himself the right to be esoteric, at least to the extent that a follower of classical thought is expected to be esoteric; and thus he reserves for himself the right to make life difficult for his interpreters, just as Maimonides made life difficult for him.

The connection between a hermeneutics of reticence and antihistoricism is stated by Strauss himself in an important discussion with G. H. Sabine, reproduced in *What Is Political Philosophy and Other Studies*, p. 221. The essential reason for this connection is the one we have already mentioned concerning the sociology of knowledge, which for Strauss is only a manifestation of historicism. Almost all of the great thinkers of the past, far from accepting more or less consciously the po-

10. *The City and Man*, pp. 61–62.
11. *What Is Political Philosophy*, p. 91.
12. *Natural Right and History*, p. 139.

litical or religious presuppositions of their time, were opposed to them—and either for reasons of caution or of method they expressed their opposition in cautious terms.

But the connection between Strauss's hermeneutics and his antihistoricism is evident from another point of view as well. In this case the connection does not appear to have been stated by Strauss himself, but it is implied in his concept of utopia. Strauss claims the superiority of classical political thought over the modern (which begins with Machiavelli) because classical thought originates from the notion of the nobility of human nature to which action must try to conform itself; in other words, the classical philosopher asks himself, "what is virtue?" But this does not mean that the classical philosopher expects to provide a sure or probable way of achieving virtue and consequently the good society. The classical philosopher acknowledges that, given the limited power of man, the achievement of the best society depends on chance. Thus, as we have seen, "the classical solution is utopian in the sense that its actualization is impossible."[13] In another context Strauss appears to claim that its achievement is indeed impossible: "Socrates makes clear in the *Republic* of what character the city would have to be in order to satisfy the highest need of man. By letting us see that the city constructed in accordance with this requirement is not possible, he lets us see the essential limits, the nature, of the city."[14] Thucydides is the counterpart of Plato for the very reason that by showing the omnipresence of war in the real city, he reaffirms the utopian character of the city built by the philosophers.[15] No classical philosopher explicitly acknowledges the intrinsic improbability of his discourse; no ancient philosopher explicitly acknowledges that the extent of Plato's feasability lies in the truth described by Thucydides. Hence, we can conclude that reticence is intrinsic to the classical point of view because the classical point of view is utopistic.

It is not my intention to dwell upon the details of the antihistoricist thought of L. Strauss, which is well known.[16] But we should be re-

13. *On Tyranny*, p. 225. For a different interpretation, see G. Lichtheim, *The Concept of Ideology and Other Essays*, New York, 1967, pp. 159–65.

14. *The City and Man*, p. 138.

15. Ibid., p. 239.

16. Two recent reaffirmations: *Relativism and the Study of Man*, ed. H. Schoeck and J. W. Wiggins, Princeton, 1961, pp. 135–57, where L. Strauss criticizes I. Berlin; *The Predicament of Modern Politics*, ed. H. J. Spaeth, Detroit, 1964, pp. 41–54 and 91–103, where we find interesting contacts between L. Strauss and American scholars of St. Thomas Aquinas.

minded that for Strauss the understanding of natural law implies the question *quid sit deus*, which is the open question at the end of *The City and Man*. Hence, according to Strauss, it is only natural that Machiavelli should break the classical tradition by proposing an antireligious code of action: "The only element of Christianity which Machiavelli took over was the idea of propaganda. This idea is the only link between his thought and Christianity. He attempted to destroy Christianity by the same means by which Christianity was originally established."[17] According to Strauss, Spinoza and Hobbes are also atheists. The question *quid sit deus* cannot be conceived by Strauss in generic terms. Between 1925 and 1932, while a member of the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums in Berlin, Strauss worked on his books on Spinoza and Maimonides as well as on his contributions to the edition of M. Mendelssohn. Strauss belongs to that movement of rebirth of Jewish philosophical and historical thought in Germany, a movement headed with different approaches by M. Lazarus and H. Cohen respectively, which led, among other things, to the foundation of the Academy for the Science of Judaism.

The story of this rebirth in Germany is short-lived because Hitler put an end to it in 1933. Franz Rosenzweig, the major German-Jewish thinker from this period, the author of *Der Stern der Erlösung* (1921), was already dead by 1929; Strauss's book on Spinoza is dedicated to him. Others, such as G. Scholem, the great scholar of medieval mysticism, Y. Baer, the historian of Jewish Spain, and M. Buber, the discoverer of Hasidism, emigrated to Palestine before or after Hitler and made up the small group of founders of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Rabbi L. Baeck, who remained in Germany and acted as counsellor and guide, was in a concentration camp during World War II. Others still, like E. Täubler, the historian of antiquity, and L. Strauss ended up in America. Some of these thinkers, above all Franz Rosenzweig, had a marked interest in Hegelianism. K. Löwith, however, has been able to show that Rosenzweig and Heidegger have points in common.[18] Rosenzweig's interest in medieval Jewish thought mostly had to do with the translation and commentary of the poet Judas Levita (1927). The basis for a specific preference for medieval Jewish Aristotelianism had already been set by H. Cohen; it is also strongly present in *Philosophie des Judentums* by J. Guttmann (1933), later a professor at the Univer-

17. *What Is Political Philosophy*, p. 45.

18. Now in *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, Stuttgart, 1960, pp. 68–92. See B. Casper in *Philosoph. Jahrb.* 74 (1967): 310–39. Rosenzweig's influence on E. Levinas is well known.

sity of Jerusalem.[19] But, unless I am mistaken, it was L. Strauss in his book on Maimonides, especially in a chapter containing an important discussion of the interpretation of J. Guttmann, who emphasized that medieval Arab and Jewish philosophy is sui generis because it is based on a law revealed by the prophets that must be comprehended by philosophers. The difference between Maimonides and Plato is that Maimonides does not expect a future philosopher-king; he already has one from the past. In the recent introduction (1962) to the English translation of his 1930 book on Spinoza, Strauss has retraced the history of his agreement with the position of Maimonides as the expression of a theistic rationalism, and he has shown that, with Maimonides as his guide, he was departing from Rosenzweig's more mystical position, which was at the basis of the book he had then written on Spinoza.

Strauss's theism not only explains his antihistoricism in general; it also suggests how one should read his commentary to *Der Begriff des Politischen* by C. Schmitt.[20] It was inevitable that Strauss would sympathize with a thinker who was breaking away from the premises of liberalism. But Strauss ended his study with the sharp and, at the same time, tricky remark that one had to wait and see how Schmitt would have managed to interpret Hobbes over time. In the meantime, Strauss was already working on Hobbes in order to prove that Hobbes's view of human nature marked a complete breach with classical tradition, including Thucydides, to whom Hobbes owed a great deal. While for the classics (according to Strauss) natural law is a rule and an objective measure, independent of human will, which man must obey, for Hobbes natural law represents an ensemble of subjective rights that originate in the human will. The question Strauss was asking Schmitt implied that he was placing Schmitt in a tradition of thought with which Strauss disagreed. K. Löwith, in his famous study of Schmitt, which he published in 1935 under the pseudonym (inevitable under

19. It is, of course, impossible to provide here an introduction to this important movement of thought. The *Year Book* of the Leo Baeck Institute of London, which commenced publication in 1956, includes essays and important bibliography (for example, there are essays on F. Rosenzweig, J. Guttmann, and E. Täubler). N. N. Glatzer, a pupil of F. Rosenzweig and now a professor at Brandeis University, has dedicated to the master a biography followed by an anthology, *F. Rosenzweig: His Life and Thought*, New York, 1961. For many of these figures, see G. Scholem's critique in *Judaica*, Frankfurt am Main, 1963, and elsewhere. An essay by Y. Baer, who worked with Strauss at the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, should be compared with Strauss's ideas: *Galut*, English trans., New York, 1947 (written around 1936?). Fundamental for contemporary German culture is now H. Liebeschütz, *Das Judentum im deutschen Geschichtsbild von Hegel bus Max Weber*, Tübingen, 1967.

20. In *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 67 (1932): 732–49.

the circumstances) H. Fiala, had already suggested Strauss's interpretation.[21]

In Strauss's more recent books, the theistic and more specifically Jewish premises that appear in his early books are less evident. This can be interpreted in many ways. It does not appear to me that Strauss, after his book on Maimonides, has changed his mind about anything; he has only made a greater use of reticence, which he increasingly has come to regard as the characteristic element of classical thought.[22] His theory of natural law is essentially an interpretation of theism as attainable through reason.

Strauss's hermeneutic principle—that there exist a greater number of philosophers than we think who practice reticence when writing—can, of course, also be accepted, or considered worthy of constant verification, by those who do not necessarily relate it to the character of what Strauss calls classical political philosophy. It is also obvious to me that some of Strauss's most important studies—the one on Xenophon, on Thucydides, and, less persuasively, on Aristophanes, to limit ourselves to the ancients—do not depend so much on the principle of reticence as on the ability to comprehend and relate understatements, to appreciate the implicit, to become an attentive and perspicacious reader.

21. See K. Löwith, *Ges. Abhandlungen*, pp. 93–127, especially pp. 106 and 108. See also D. Cantimori in *Studi Germanici* (1935): 471–89. Strauss's essay on Schmitt is now translated in the appendix to the English edition of his book on Spinoza (1965). Cantimori, who of course was very familiar with Löwith's study, does not appear to have read Strauss's work, where Schmitt's *Bewunderung der animalischen Kraft* (p. 744) by had been noted as far back as 1932. Strauss's interpretation of Hobbes is critiqued by C. A. Viano in *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia* (1962): 355.

22. As far as I know, the last public statement of Leo Strauss's thought on Judeo-Christian relationships is in "Perspectives on the Good Society: A Jewish-Protestant Colloquium," an article published in *Criterion*, a journal of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago (Summer 1963): 2–9. It is typical of Strauss that in reaffirming his Judaism he should declare: "the most profound truth cannot be written and not even said." He also adds, "a secession from this world might again become necessary for Jews and even for Christians." In the even more recent Frank Cohen Public Lecture, "Jerusalem and Athens," or the City College of New York, 1967, the contrast between reason (Athens) and revelation (Jerusalem) seems extreme; and the implications are not clear to me.

It should be noted that the above bibliography of Strauss's works does not include his early contributions to the review *Der Jude*, edited by M. Buber. These contributions are essential for anyone wishing to reconstruct the genesis of Strauss's thought. We find here a long and important discussion of H. Cohen's interpretation of Spinoza (vol. 8, 1924, pp. 295–314) as well as a penetrating of study the Zionism of M. Nordau (vol. 7, 1923, pp. 657–60). In the same issue (pp. 489–93), a note by J. Guttmann clarifies the initial objectives of the Akademie für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, founded in 1919. Unless I am mistaken, Täubler was the first director.

But with the moral rectitude and dialectic ability of a thinker like Leo Strauss, one should not suggest distinctions—and here I cannot help remembering my memorable meetings with this fragile, proud man on the campus of the University of Chicago. Strauss has been able to uphold certain principles of Arab and Jewish medieval philosophy in the contemporary debate between historicism and sociology; he has developed (under the influence of traditional methods of Talmudic exegesis) an original hermeneutics of texts; finally, he has proceeded from medieval thought to classical thought, not with the intention of rediscovering the modernity of the classics but of drawing inspiration from their example in order to fight the moderns. "Modernity has progressed to the point where it has visibly become a problem."[23] It could almost be said that Strauss's problem was Maimonides' problem.

In Memoriam: Leo Strauss (February 1977)

Leo Strauss died on October 18, 1973 at the age of seventy-four at St. John's College of Annapolis. He had been Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence there since 1969 and his influence as a scholar and teacher had long been preeminent; he also contributed to making this institution one of the most vital centers of American humanism. During the last years of his life, he had continued to interpret texts by Plato and Xenophon in order to understand the origins of classical political thought in the context of what he considered to be the central problem in human life: the relationship between wisdom and faith. *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse* (1970), *Xenophon's Socrates* (1972), and the posthumous *The Argument and the Action of Plato's Laws* (1973) are Strauss's main contributions from this period. We also must be add the collection of essays from 1968, *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*, and the 1965 reprint of *Preface to Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (1962), which is increasingly considered a unique combination of autobiography, self-criticism, and philosophical testament. Here, more so than in the enigmatic text *Jerusalem and Athens* (1967), two equally legitimate stances are compared: the acceptance of the commandment of God, which in Judaism is expressed through obedience to the Torah, and the "Wisdom of the Greeks," whose principle is not the fear of God but wonder. Hence, "tertium non datur"? Logically speaking, "tertium non datur." Yet the

23. *What Is Political Philosophy*, 172. (See G. P. Grant in *Social Research* 31 [1964]: 45–72. Among the most recent writings of L. Strauss's "Notes on Maimonides' Book of Knowledge," in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to G. G. Scholem*, Jerusalem, 1967, pp. 269–83.)

secret position of the philosopher within Judaism (as the example of Maimonides demonstrates) is that of speaking of reason in the world of faith, of defending reason in the name of those who respect and understand faith but do not share it. In essence, this is the secret role that Leo Strauss, a disciple of Maimonides, had assigned himself. Born into an Orthodox family, Strauss had gradually ceased to frequent the synagogue. Nevertheless, he spoke as a Jewish philosopher and was well aware—in fact because he was well aware—of the fact that one is Jewish not out of a philosophical conviction but out of a humble acceptance of divine law. Although he was very familiar with Thomas Aquinas and with Christian and Muslin medieval philosophy in general, and thus could have discussed arguments related not only to Judaism but to Christianity and Islam as well, he refrained from doing so, in part out of a natural respect for the difference of other traditions of life and thought, but more so out of a primitive need to understand clearly the tradition of the fathers and the sense of their secular sacrifice. Few men have loved the faith of the fathers with so much austere love as Leo Strauss, who understood it but did not share it, the German Jew who was inspired by Max Weber, Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt, not to mention Kant and Hegel. Those who have known Leo Strauss can appreciate the truth to the Jewish formula for the dead: "his memory is a blessing."[24]

24. Following Strauss's death, a quantity of articles and memoirs have been published, some of which are mentioned by Emma Brossard in *The Academic Reviewer* (Fall–Winter 1974): 1–5. Particularly interesting is Ralph Lerner's article in *American Jewish Year Book* (1976): 91–97. But much remains to be said.